



State Council on Developmental Disabilities



STATE OF CALIFORNIA

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GOVERNOR BROWN SIGNS LEGISLATION TO IMPROVE EMPLOYMENT FIRST

SACRAMENTO – The State Council on Developmental Disabilities (SCDD) applauds Governor Brown for signing AB 1696 (Insurance Omnibus: Developmental Services). Included in AB 1696 is SB 433 (Mendoza) that the Council was proud to sponsor. The bill will require the Employment Development Department to share data with the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) regarding the status of persons with developmental disabilities accessing competitive integrated employment (CIE). “The Council thanks Governor Brown for signing this important bill, and Senator Mendoza for sponsoring it. This data is critical to assisting SCDD and the work of our Employment First Committee to better understand and assess the progress towards people with developmental disabilities getting real work for real pay.” stated Dr. April Lopez, Chair of the Council.

This bill is needed because the data currently available cannot be examined for trends based on geography, disability type, severity of disability, ethnicity, or age. There is also limited data on the quality of employment for the people served and a lack of data on regional center clients who do not receive day or employment services. Without a better understanding of the demographics that lead to successful employment outcomes, California cannot know how well it is doing to implement the Employment First policy.

The Council has also released to Governor Brown and the members of the State Legislature its [yearly report](#) on the status of Employment First for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The State Council leads the Employment First Committee (EFC) created in 2013. The EFC is charged with identifying strategies and recommending policy changes to increase to CIE. California’s Employment First Policy in Welfare and Institutions Code Section 4869(a)(1) states that it is of the highest priority of the state of California to ensure every person with intellectual and developmental disabilities has access to CIE. However, the goal of CIE has yet to be realized by Californians with disabilities.

“The Council advocates, promotes & implements policies and practices that achieve self-determination, independence, productivity & inclusion in all aspects of community life for Californians with developmental disabilities and their families.”

“Federal and state policies have changed, and there is still much work to do in California for every person with intellectual and developmental disabilities to realize the goals of being economically self-sufficient and a taxpayer,” stated Jenny Ning Yang, Chair of the Employment First Committee. Moving forward, the EFC recommends that additional work is needed to realize the goals of CIE including to establish measurable outcomes for the implementation of the Employment First policy, align and incentivize funding for CIE, phase out subminimum wage and sheltered work programs, and improve the availability of benefits planning information.

The report finds that the employment rate of people with disabilities is far behind the employment rate for people without disabilities. Also, the employment rate for people with developmental disabilities is far behind the rate for people with all types of disabilities. While the employment rates for the general population and people with disabilities started to increase after the recession, the employment rate for people with developmental disabilities has remained flat. In 2015, of the approximately 159,000 working age individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities served through the Regional Center system, only about 2.76 percent are engaged in CIE. Far more often people with intellectual and developmental disabilities are engaged in other types of work that often pay below minimum wage. Approximately 3.71 percent are engaged in supported group employment and approximately 5.72 percent are engaged in work activity programs.

The report’s findings are consistent with the most recent data contained in the [StateData: The National Report on Employment Services and Outcomes](#) (2016) that finds the number of people served by the DDS has steadily increased, but the percentage of people served in integrated employment has declined from 15 percent in 2010 to 12 percent in 2015, while the number of people served in non-work settings has steadily increased during that time.

By obtaining more nuanced data, the EFC can better address the employment data reported above by analyzing the factors that contribute to progress towards CIE and developing more effective strategies to improve employment opportunities. SCDD applauds Governor Brown for signing this important legislation today. It is a positive step towards realizing the goal of CIE for every person with an intellectual or developmental disability.

Close to 50 years ago, Congress established the State Councils in every state and territory. The Councils are authorized in the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000 to ensure that individuals with developmental disabilities and their families design and can access services and supports that “promote self-determination, independence, productivity, and integration and inclusion” in community life. The Lanterman Act establishes the SCDD in California to be comprised of 31 members appointed by the Governor, including individuals with disabilities, their families, other partners and state agencies. The SCDD develops a five-year state plan to implement the DD Act through the work of 12 regional offices in California. The plan is developed with stakeholder input and is focused on addressing systemic barriers to employment, housing, education, community supports, health and safety for persons with developmental disabilities.